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Patent and Trademark Information: Uses and Perspectives, “Introduction”

Virginia A. Baldwin

University of Nebraska-Lincoln, vbaldwin2@unl.edu

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INTRODUCTION

There is a patent office at the seat of government of the universe, whose managers are as much interested in the dispersion of seeds as anybody at Washington can be, and their operations are infinitely more extensive and regular.

- Henry David Thoreau, "The Succession of Forest Trees" (1860), in *The Writings of Henry David Thoreau*, vol. 5, p. 187, Houghton Mifflin (1906).

Perchance, coming generations will not abide the dissolution of the globe, but, availing themselves of future inventions in aerial locomotion, and the navigation of space, the entire race may migrate from the earth, to settle some vacant and more western planet.... It took but little art, a simple application of natural laws, a canoe, a paddle, and a sail of matting, to people the isles of the Pacific, and a little more will people the shining isles of space.

- Henry David Thoreau. "Paradise (To Be) Regained" (1843), in *The Writings of Henry David Thoreau*, vol. 4, p. 292, Houghton Mifflin (1906).

PTDL's are empowered by the USPTO to manage knowledge of intellectual property information...

- Martha Crockett Sneed – former manager of the PTDL program at the USPTO.

With the advent of United States patent and trademark information through the Internet, access is now readily available for librarians in academic libraries that are not depositories of this government information. Since each state has no more than one or a few Patent and Trademark Depository Libraries (PTDL), this United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) achievement marks a new frontier in the Offices' goal of patent and trademark information access.

The information explosion has hit the intellectual property world. Now a researcher, inventor, genealogist, scientist, engineer, or any interested party can search United States, European, and international patent databases. All that is needed is an Internet connection and a Web browser. Patent literature has been defined as "grey literature" with the implication that it is difficult to locate a specific piece of the wealth of technological information that it contains.

This volume covers historical, practical, business, and research aspects of the use of patent and trademark information in the United States and in countries worldwide. While not covering the USPTO web site (www.uspto.gov) in depth, articles on patent searching cover the basic steps. On trademark searching an article gives case examples and appropriate searches, and another gives an in-depth explanation of a European patent Web site. A patent searcher or librarian who reads this volume will be well-equipped to perform a preliminary patent search. Those readers who need further assistance with the USPTO web site can proceed, armed with the knowledge of the step by step process, to the help screen on the patent Web sites, to a Patent and Trademark Depository Librarian (locations are given in "Finding Grandpa's Patent: Using Patent Information for Historical or Genealogical Research") or to any librarian who is well versed in reading and interpreting database help screens.

An appropriate topic for the post "9-11" atmosphere still existent in 2003, this volume begins with an historical look at United States government seizure of intellectual property rights during World War II. In "Patents For Victory: Disseminating Enemy Technical Information During World War II," Michael White, an employee of the USPTO, traces the seizure of foreign-owned patents and the beginnings of the Patent and Trademark Depository Library Program as part of the Office of Alien Property Custodian's effort to accomplish the mission of making foreign patent information available to American industries for use in the war effort.

Before the creation of the USPTO Web site for patent and trademark searching, the USPTO outlined and distributed to Patent and Trademark Depository Libraries a seven-step method to describe the patent searching process. In "The Seven Steps: Basic Novelty Patent Searching," Patent and Trademark Depository Program librarian Donna Hopkins describes the seven step process and translates that process into use of the databases that are currently available on the USPTO Web site. This article provides a basic understanding of intellectual property forms and clearly describes the key to patent "novelty" searching, that of determining the appropriate classes and subclasses for an invention. A good overview of the process, Hopkins provides details that even the experienced PTDL librarian may find useful.

The aforementioned article "Finding Grandpa's Patent: Using Patent Information for Historical or Genealogical Research" is an invaluable asset to the librarian who is asked to find information on historical patents. In this treatise Jan Comfort gives information on the intricacies of gleaned desired facts when often inadequate details are known by the patron. Comfort's article includes an annotated bibliography of print and electronic resources that provide a variety of potential clues for these types of searches and provides a list of PTDLs in which many of these resources reside.

In "*esp@cenet*®: Europe's Network of Patent Databases" Gerry McKiernan introduces us to the world of patents outside of the United States. He explains the structure of two classification systems at the European Patent Office and the language of the framework that has been established so that an inventor can more easily obtain protection in countries outside of his or her own. A must-read for those who want to extend their patent novelty search beyond the registrations of their own country, McKiernan's article includes many important database and search details obtained from communications with the European Patent Office. An important detail that is explained in his text is the greater range of bibliographic access to historical United States patents that is currently available through *esp@cenet*® as compared to the USPTO Web site.

Stephen Adams provides historical details about the origin and structure of regional patent offices and systems throughout the world in "Regional Patent Systems: A Challenge for the International Searcher." Adams differentiates between various regional systems, in terms of many aspects such as the application process itself, whether the regional system actually grants the patents, and whether the regional system will be involved in any litigation of its granted patents.

There are several databases that provide a variety of interfaces and complexity of search structures for United States patent data. In "Patent Data for Technology Assessment, Part I: Applications, Patent Databases, and Retrieval Methods" authors Cynthia A. Kehoe and Xiao Jason Yu describe database aspects within the framework of a variety of uses of patent information. In doing so, the stage is set for a follow-up description of an investigation of a specific area of technology, that of the global positioning system (GPS) in "Patent Data for Technology Assessment, Part II: Using U.S. Patent Data to Examine Trends in GPS Technology." In part II the same authors show how patent data can be retrieved and mined to find patterns of development and innovations in an area of technology (GPS).

Two articles in this volume cover the (United States) world of trademark searching. In "Finding Your Way Through The Trademark Information Maze," Charlotte Erdmann accomplishes much. She gives basic guidance in performing a trademark search, compares two USPTO databases for trademark searching, and through a variety of sample scenarios, gives insight into a myriad of possibilities for finding value in trademark information. Erdmann's article covers national trademark databases. In "State Trademark and Company Name Web Sites" Jim Miller introduces us to the often overlooked necessity of performing state trademark and company name searches. Miller's research provides a complete snapshot in time of the search capabilities of state trademark agencies.

This volume emerges at a crucial moment in intellectual property information availability. The charge of the science and technology librarian has always been to proactively provide service. Now for the first time in history worldwide intellectual property information is available through an easily accessible interface, the World Wide Web. Our next step is an important one. Our researchers, faculty, and students must be kept informed of the importance of this tool and the importance of learning how to use it. Through individual patron contacts, library instruction, and through library print and web-based "handouts" the opportunity is now ours to spread the word that will provide to our company's scientists, our university researchers, and our students – the scientists and engineers of the future – knowledge of and access to an information resource that is critical in their pursuit of the means to engineer the future.

Virginia Baldwin